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ABSTRACT

The purposes of this study were to determine if there is any relationship between: (1) students' creative thinking ability and their achievement in the basic college course in public speaking, and (2) teachers' estimates of creative thinking ability when compared to students' scores on a standardized creative thinking test. Subjects were 140 undergraduates in the course; all were given the AC Test of Creative Ability. Quantity scores were computed and constituted the variable, "creative thinking ability." Instructors were then asked to rank their students according to their grades; these ranks constituted the variable, "achievement in speech." Data analysis was performed. No significant relationships were found. (CK)

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CREATIVITY AND ACHIEVEMENT IN SPEECH

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Since J. P. Guilford informed the members of the American Psychological Association in 1950 that only .2% of the literature in *Psychological Abstracts* dealt with creativity, there has been an upsurge in research on this topic by psychologists and educators.(1) Since the writing and delivering of speeches are undoubtedly creative acts one might expect to find a great deal of research dealing with creativity by scholars of communication, but this is not the case. Though several have written of the importance of creative thinking for effective speaking,(2) no attempt has been made to quantitatively examine the relationship of creativity to public speaking ability or to achievement in the basic speech course. Some parallels may be drawn, however, between research findings about creativity and research findings about achievement in public speaking.

1. Neither achievement in the basic course in public speaking nor creative thinking ability has been shown to be consistently related to overall college achievement.(3)
2. No statistically significant relationship has been reported between intelligence and public speaking ability(4) and only a low positive correlation has been found between intelligence and creative thinking ability.(5)
3. There is some similarity in the personality characteristics attributed to creative persons and effective public speakers. "Self-sufficiency" and "assertiveness" are consistently attributed to highly creative individuals,(6) while "dominance" and "ascendance" have been shown to correlate higher with public speaking ability than any of the other personality traits studied.(7)

PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

The major purpose of this study was to determine if there is any significant relationship between creative thinking ability and achievement in the basic course in public speaking. A second aim was to determine if there is any relationship between speech teachers' estimates of creative thinking ability when compared to students' scores on a standardized test of creative thinking.

PROCEDURE

Subjects. One hundred forty undergraduates comprising ten sections of the introductory course in public speaking at the University of Maryland served as subjects. The classes ranged in size from nine to seventeen. This course is required for students who major in engineering, science, home economics, mathematics or physical education so each subject was enrolled in one of these colleges.

Approximately 2/3 of the course grade was based on speeches delivered before the class with the remaining 1/3 based on written work including examinations.

Five instructors, each of whom taught two of the ten sections, also participated.

Data Gathering Procedure. All subjects were given the *AC Test of Creative Ability, Short Form A* during the eighth week of the spring semester, 1967. A Kuder-Richardson estimate of internal consistency of .92 and two validation studies reported in the test's administration manual(8) convinced this author that this test would be an adequate one for measuring creative thinking ability.

The test consists of three parts which were administered consecutively within a forty-five minute class period. By requiring subjects to make as many responses as possible within a limited period of time, the test measures the subjects' abilities to forsee consequences of given situations, find reasons and explanations for given situations, and discover novel uses for common objects.

"Quantity" scores were computed for each subject for the entire test by counting the total num-

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ber of responses made. These scores constituted the variable "creative thinking ability."

Five weeks later, each participating instructor was asked to rank his students according to his estimate of their creative thinking ability. These ranks constituted the variable "estimates of creative thinking ability." The instructors were given no criteria on which to base their judgments, instead they were asked to write a few sentences describing the criteria which they set for themselves in making the estimates of creative thinking ability.

After the estimates of creative thinking had been made, the instructors were asked to rank their students according to the students' grades in the speech course. These ranks constituted the variable "achievement in speech."

Analysis of the Data. To determine the relationship of creativity to speech achievement, the subjects were divided into three groups according to their achievement in speech. The two highest-ranked, two median-ranked, and two lowest-ranked speech achievers in each of the ten sections were combined to make the three groups. Each group was made up of twenty subjects. The mean scores on the *AC Test* for these three groups were 88.95, 85.5, and 89.05 respectively and were not significantly different from one another.

To further examine this relationship, subjects were ranked according to their creativity test scores and Spearman Rank-Order correlations were computed between these and ranks for achievement in the basic course. Half of these correlations were negative and half were positive with no apparent trend whatsoever. (See Table I).

There was also no noticeable trend for correlations between estimates of creative thinking made by instructors and scores on the *AC Test* to be significantly related. In fact, four of the ten correlation coefficients were negative. (See Table I)

TABLE I
RANK-ORDER CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SPEECH ACHIEVEMENT AND AC TEST SCORES AND BETWEEN ESTIMATES OF CREATIVE THINKING AND AC TEST SCORES

Instructor & Section		N	df	Speech Achievement & AC Test Scores	Estimates of Creative Thinking & AC Test Scores
A	01	15	13	.71*	.51*
A	02	14	12	.17	-.13
B	03	12	10	-.09	-.19
B	04	12	10	-.13	-.13
C	05	15	13	.12	.13
C	06	14	12	-.12	.13
D	07	15	13	-.26	-.56*
D	08	17	15	.22	.33
E	09	17	15	-.28	.08
E	10	9	7	.37	.32

*Significant at .05 level.

CONCLUSIONS

No significant relationship was found between achievement in the basic speech course and creative thinking ability as measured by the *AC Test of Creative Ability*. Estimates of student creative thinking ability made by speech teachers appear to be unrelated to those students' scores on the standardized test of creative thinking ability.

DISCUSSION

It is interesting that although earlier research would lead one to believe that those who excel at public speaking might be highly creative individuals and that public speaking is a highly creative activity, the present study found no significant relationship between creative thinking ability and achievement in the basic speech course. Two explanations for this result come to mind. First, it is possible that public speaking is not a creative activity. Though possible, this seems unlikely. A second possible explanation is that the teachers of the basic speech course in this study did not recognize and/or reward manifestations of creative thinking in their classrooms. This seems a more likely explanation for the findings, particularly since the instructors' estimates of creative ability were found to be unrelated to the creativity test scores. The criteria which the instructors reported using in making their estimates of creative thinking was another indicator of their lack of knowledge about creativity. One reported using "gut-level impressions" and "the student's performance on exams" while another's repeated use of the word "creative" in such phrases as "creative adaptation of audience to subject" and "creative supporting material" indicated vague ideas about creative thinking and possible ways in which it might be manifested in the basis speech course.

If this analysis of the results is valid and can be generalized to other speech instructors, a most unfortunate situation exists in the basic speech course. While this is one of the few courses in higher education in which creativity can be encouraged and rewarded, those who teach it appear to know very little about creative thinking.

If this is the case, it seems hard to deny that programs for the preparation of speech teachers would profit by an increased emphasis on the growing body of literature about creative thinking.

Furthermore, as an area for research, creative thinking in the speech classroom and public speaking situation is still relatively uncultivated. Of the many questions that have not yet been investigated, the following are but a few: Does training in public speaking have any effect on the creative thinking of individuals? What effect does the relative creative thinking ability of the speech instructor have on his effectiveness as a teacher or upon his students' speaking efforts? Can specific aspects of the basic course in public speaking be identified that lend themselves to the emphasis and development of creative thinking abilities?

NOTES

Mr. Rossiter is currently an instructor in the Department of Communication and a research associate in the Speech-Communication Center at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. This article is based in part upon his Master's Thesis completed at the University of Maryland in 1968.

(1) J. P. Guilford, "Creativity," *American Psychologist,* V (September, 1950), p. 444.

(2) Nels G. Juleus, "A Plan for Teaching Speech Preparation," *Speech Teacher,* XIV, (March, 1965), p. 107-109; Keith R. St. Onge, *Creative Speech,* (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1964); Otis M. Walter, "Creativity: A Neglected Factor in Public Speaking," *Speech Teacher,* III, (September, 1954), pp. 159-168.

(3) E. Paul Torrance, *Guiding Creative Talent* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1962); Allen C. Tucker, "Creativity and Its Relationship to Success in College as Measured by the Grade Point Average: Research Study No. 1" (unpublished Ed.D. dissertation, Colorado State College, 1965), p. 24; Philip Bond Ray, "A Descriptive Study of Certain Characteristics of 'High Creative' Freshman Arts College Students as Compared to 'High Academic Potential' Students," (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1962).

(4) Clyde W. Dow, "Intelligence and Ability in Public Performance," *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* XXVII, (February, 1941), p. 114.

(5) Jacob W. Getzels and Philip W. Jackson, *Creativity and Intelligence,* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962).

(6) Calvin W. Taylor, "A Tentative Description of the Creative Individual," *Sourcebook of Creative Thinking,* Sidney J. Parnes and Harold F. Harding, eds. (New York: Scribner, 1962), pp. 170-172; Frank X. Barron, "The Psychology of Imagination," also in *Sourcebook,* p. 236.

(7) Clyde W. Dow, "The Personality Traits of Effective Public Speakers," *Quarterly Journal of Speech,* XXVII (December, 1941), p. 530; Howard Gilkinson and Franklin H. Knower, "Personality Tests and Skill in Speech," *Journal of Educational Psychology,* XXXIII (March, 1941), pp. 172-173.

(8) Industrial Relations Center, University of Chicago, *AC Test of Creative Ability, Test Administration Manual* (Chicago: Education-Industry Service, 1959).